DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 187 CS 210 763

AUTHOR Olasky, Marvin N.
TITLE Liberal Boosterism and Conservative Distancing: Newspaper Coverage of the Chambers-Hiss Affair, 1948-1950.
PUB DATE Aug 87
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (70th, San Antonio, TX, August 1-4, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communism; *Court Litigation; Editorials; Media Research; News Media; *Newspapers; *News Reporting; News Writing; *Press Opinion
IDENTIFIERS Chambers (Whittaker); Espionage; *Hiss (Alger); *Journalism History; *Media Bias; USSR

ABSTRACT

A study examined coverage of Alger Hiss's trial for spying for the Soviet Union in the conservative Los Angeles "Times" and Chicago "Tribune," and the liberal Washington "Post" and New York "Times." It was hypothesized that (1) the liberal newspapers would favor Hiss, especially in their editorials; (2) the conservative newspapers would support Hiss's accuser, Whittaker Chambers; (3) as evidence against Hiss mounted, the liberal newspapers would decrease their support for Hiss and admit a grudging respect for Chambers' testimony; and that (4) as the trial proceeded, the conservative newspapers would hear the deeper messages against U.S. and Soviet materialism that Chambers was presenting and would relay them to readers. Results of the content analysis showed that the conservative and liberal newspapers originally split on ideological grounds, but as the evidence against Hiss accumulated, the New York "Times" shifted its support to Chambers. Additionally, the Washington "Post," after wavering in its support of Hiss in light of his perjury, resumed its hardline pro-Hiss stance, but the conservative newspapers, though they supported Chambers on political grounds, did not support his religious views, and seemed to lose interest in him in their summations of the trial. Hence, the first two hypotheses were upheld, the third was partly upheld, and the fourth was not upheld. (Seventy-four notes are included.) (JC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED285187

Qualitative Studies Division

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

LIBERAL BOOSTERISM AND CONSERVATIVE DISTANCING:

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE CHAMBERS-HISS AFFAIR, 1948-1950

Dr. Marvin N. Olasky
Assistant Professor
Department of Journalism
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas 78712

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marvin Olasky

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper delivered at Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication convention, San Antonio, Texas, August, 1987.

CS210763

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LIBERAL BOOSTERISM AND CONSERVATIVE DISTANCING: NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE CHAMBERS-HISS AFFAIR, 1948-1950

One of the most controversial news stories of the mid-twentieth century arose in 1948 when ex-Communist Whittaker Chambers accused former State Department official Alger Hiss of spying for the Soviet Union. Hundreds of books and articles have discussed the Chambers-Hiss confrontation;[1] a footnote summarizes the basic developments of the affair.[2] One important part of the story has not been covered, though: Press reaction.[3] This paper attempts to fill that gap through examination of Chambers-Hiss coverage in two leading liberal newspapers (Washington Post, New York Times) and two then known as conservative (Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times).

The study began with four hypotheses. The first was that the liberal newspapers, in their editorials and to a lesser extent in their news stories, initially would favor Hiss. The second was that the conservative newspapers would be similarly slanted toward Chambers. The third was that, as the evidence against Hiss mounted, the liberal newspapers would decrease news and editorial support for Hiss and indicate grudging respect for Chambers' testimony. The fourth was that, as the trials proceeded, the conservative newspapers would hear the deeper messages Chambers was presenting, and would try to relay them to their readers.

The first two hypotheses proved to be correct, the third half right but half wrong, and the fourth mostly wrong.

Methodology

The Chambers-Hiss affair had four phases. During the first (August-November, 1948) Chambers made his initial charges and Hiss charged Chambers with libel. During the second phase (December, 1948-May, 1949) Chambers brought out evidence, including microfilm of stolen documents with Hiss' notes on them, that led to a perjury indictment against Hiss. The third phase (June-December, 1949) encompassed most of the two trials for perjury. The fourth phase (January, 1950) included the legal wrap-up and the conviction of Hiss; it provided journalists an opportunity to sum up the long affair and comment on the meaning of the events they had been covering.

The four newspapers were examined during each of the four periods. Pro-Hiss or pro-Chambers positions were obvious in explicit editorials but, due to the nature of the Chambers-Hiss dispute, they were not hard to spot in news stories either. That is because Hiss and Chambers had opposite agendas during the hearings and trials: Hiss wanted a focus on Chambers' lie-filled past, while Chambers' lawyers concentrated on the evidence of what Hiss had done. Stories that followed one agenda or the other were considered pro-Hiss or pro-Chambers. The study emphasized careful examination of descriptive detail, not quantification.

For example, there were two major developments on June 2,

1949: Chambers testified that Alger Hiss had furnished government secrets to the Soviets, but Chambers also admitted having himself lied while a Communist during the 1930s. The following day the Washington Post emphasized the pro-Hiss angle, "Lies Admitted by Chambers," while the Los Angeles limes and the Chicago Tribune presented pro-Chambers headlines: "Hiss Aided Russian Spy, Court Told" and "Hiss Aided Reds: Chambers."[4] Each newspaper ran angled stories consistent with their headlines.

Examining the newspapers' slants in news stories also was aided by reporters' penchants for characterizing the emotional state of witnesses in ways that supported their editorial stands. For example, in describing the events of June 2 mentioned above, the liberal Post reported that "Chambers seemed to be showing discomfiture," while the conservative Tribune noted that Chambers "never lost his composure."[5]

Now, to the findings.

Phase one: Liberals for Hiss, Conservatives for Chambers

In phase one, all four newspapers were exactly where they were expected to be, according to their ideological positions. From August through November, 1948, Washington Post and New York Times news coverage emphasized the improbability of Hiss' guilt. The Washington Post quoted prominently the character witnesses produced by Hiss (Supreme Court justices, Congressmen, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, former Secretaries of State, and so on) and asked of Chambers: "Is he a man of sanity?"[6] The New York Times laid on evocative specific detail: "Hiss, tall, slender, youthful in appearance and build, answered in strong tones. He

stood by his previous testimony. Chambers, heavy-set, weary-looking, answered in dull barely audible tones. Tears were in his eyes."[7]

On the editorial page, the Post protested "the entry of our society into the twilight zone between government by law and government by lawlessness," and compared Hiss to "an innocent pedestrian, spattered with mud by a passing vehicle."[8] The New York Times chose for its editorial page cartoons of a man labeled "anti-Red smear war" cutting off the nose of the Statue of Liberty; a man in a prompter's box labeled "Politics" feeding lines to a man in cloak and dagger on a stage labeled "The Washington Super-Spy Thriller"; and a laughing man labeled "Campaign Politics" drawing a beard and mustache on a poster picturing a woman labeled "Civil Liberties."[9]

The Chicago Tribune, though, saw Chambers' testimony as a strong blow directed against an Administration supposedly ignoring widespread treason.[10] After Chambers' first day of testimony the Tribune ran a front page banner headline, "NEW DEAL COVERUP TOLD," with a lead stating that "A nine year "cover up" by the Roosevelt and Truman administrations of evidence exposing prominent New Dealers as workers for Russian interests was revealed to the house un-American activities committee today."[11] The Tribune also emphasized Hiss' continued Washington connections by noting that Secretary of State Marshall had just named Hiss vice chairman of a United Nations Day committee.[12]

The tone for the Tribune's coverage was set that same day in an editorial, "UNMASKING THE REDS," which predicted that the

Washington hearings would not recklessly assault individual liberties, but instead would show:

> to what a material degree the Communist conspiracy has established itself within the New Deal bureaucracy. After years of pampering by the New Deal, the Communists at last are being driven from cover. Investigation will show whether they were protected because their protectors in government were themselves sympathetic to communism and to a soviet America erected upon the ruins of republican liberty.[13]

The Tribune foresaw the possibility that "this nation is going to be shocked into consciousness of the communist danger by a series of trials of public officials charged with betraying their country."[14]

The Los Angeles Times also tied the hearings to ideological trends within the federal bureaucracy. The Times' page one, top right four column headline on August 4 was, "Four New Dealers Linked to Spy Ring by Ex-Red."[15] An August 11 editorial, "Spies and Blunt Instruments," said that criticism of the congressional hearings was unwarranted since they were only the way to break through the cover-up: Officials "definitely did not want the public to know that any New Dealers were involved in Communist conspiracies."[16]

Phase Two: Movement to the Right

Particularly in December, 1948, as damning detail regarding Hiss' alleged involvement poured in, reporters and editorial writers at both the Post and the New York Times appeared to hesitate.[17] Post editorials indicate the pattern most clearly. On December 5, the Post argued that:

> The latest chapter in the Whittaker Chambers story is so fantastic that many citizens may be inclined to

> write it off as a nightmare. We are told that microfilms which may contain evidence of treason or wholesale theft of confidential documents from the State and Navy Departments have been found in a 'hollowed-out-pumpkin' on Mr. Chambers' Maryland farm. That detail along seems to give the story the aura of a Halloween prank.[18]

A December 8 editorial continued to complain about investigators "behaving unpeculiarly," but noted the existence of "genuine documentary evidence."[19]

By its December 10 editorial, though, the Post was retreating:

> the situation has completely changed with the seizure of microfilms picturing secret documents obviously stolen from the State Department and delivered to an avowed Communist.... [Chambers] appears to have proved beyond any reasonable doubt that Communists had a pipe line into the State Department.[20]

In succeeding months, the Post continued to argue Hiss' innocence, but admitted in its editorial columns that "the circumstantial case against Mr. Hiss was grown [sic] gradually stronger..."[21]

The New York Times backed away similarly from support for Hiss. It gave front page, top right three column headlines to statements such as "Spy Papers Show U.S. Codes Were Broken, Official Says"; Alger Hiss' denials of involvement received secondary play.[22] On December 9 a Times editorial discussed the need to guard secrets from "the treachery of either mercenary or deluded citizens and officials," and admitted "There can no longer be any doubt that there has been considerable laxity on that score."[23]

The conservative newspapers appeared jubilant. A December 3 Chicago Tribune headline noted the existence of "Sensational New

Evidence in Alger Hiss Case/ Consternation in Official Circles."[24] The following day's headline stressed the Roosevelt/Truman Administration connection twice in eight words: "New Deal Reds' Espionage Ring in F.D.R. Regime."[25] The battle was not only Chambers vs. Hiss, according to the Tribune, but open records vs. cover-up: "Spy Probers Defy Administration Gag... The Truman administration brought tremendous pressure to bear today... in an attempt to suppress the documentary evidence."[26] According to the Tribune, federal bureaucrats feared that "a train of events might be started by revelations at the hearings which would culminate in one of the great scandals of American history."[27]

The Los Angeles Times similarly promoted Chambers' agenda with front page news coverage and editorials. On December 8, for example, the Times editorialized that "Never before have we stood at the verge of war with a foreign power with so little official concern over that power's accomplished network of spies and saboteurs."[28] The editorial asked for "further investigation as to whether the climate of the government bureaus has changed since Hiss was in the [State] Department."[29]

Phase three: The Liberal Newspapers Diverge

A surprising turn came in June, 1949, when Hiss actually went on trial. The New York Times continued its phase two trend toward reservedness in reporting, but the Post began running regularly loaded descriptions of how "the tall, lean, 44-year-old Hiss, whose highly successful civilian and Government career was sensationally challenged by Chambers last August 3, stared

fixedly at his accuser."[30] In the pages of the Post, Hiss always "calmly strode to the stand."[31] He was always "sure of himself, answering the barrage of questions without hesitation, showing no uneasiness or equivocation."[32] He "appeared to be almost enjoying himself as he parried many of the attempts of Prosecutor Thomas F. Murphy to shake his story."[33]

Post portrayal of Chambers during this third phase was very different. Hiss' agenda received top billing: "Hiss Counsel Calls Accuser Mental Case," "Hiss Plans to Test Chambers' Sanity."[34] Post stories quoted defense attacks on Chambers: "Unsound mind...traitor, thief, liar, perjurer, enemy of his country, hypocrite... abnormal... psychopathic sadism ... a petty larceny thief."[35] Reporters added their own critical descriptions of Chambers, such as "customary air of complete emotionless detachment" or "supercilious expression."[36]

Post editorials, after their phase two consternation, also returned to a strong pro-Hiss and anti-Chambers position. One Post editorialist in July, 1949, pooh-poohed the evidence which had seemed so strong a half year before, and instead emphasized "mysteries" of the Hiss trial and Chambers' "complex and enigmatic motives."[37]

The New York Times, meanwhile, was giving weight to the evidence, including copies of secret State Department documents retyped on a typewriter Hiss had at his home.[38] The deviation of Post perspective from Times treatment was clear on June 3, 1949, as Chambers was testifying about Hiss' Soviet involvement and then undergoing cross-examination. The Post headlined its story,

"Chambers Admits Not Telling Truth,"[39] while the New York Times had an opposite emphasis: "Chambers Swears Hiss, While a Red, Got Secret Papers."[40]

The Times story began, "Whittaker Chambers supported Government charges of perjury against Alger Hiss yesterday when he testified in Federal Court that he had received State Department documents on munitions from Mr. Hiss between February, 1937, and April, 1938."[41] Not until the sixteenth paragraph of the story did the Times report what the Washington Post saw as the day's big story, Chambers' admission of past lying.

Stories also were angled differently on June 7, when once again there were two pieces of news. First, Chambers testified that a second State Department employee, Julian Wadleigh, had spied for the Soviets. Second, Chambers admitted that he had lied during testimony at Congressional hearings the year before in order to give his former friend Hiss a chance to escape further punishment. The Washington Post ran a page one banner headline, "Chambers Admits He Lied to Congress," followed by a pro-Hiss lead: "Under vigorous cross-examination which sought to depict him as a confused neurotic, Whittaker Chambers admitted some further conflict in his account."[42]

The New York Times story, though, was headlined "Chambers Names 2d U.S. Employe As Giving Spy Data."[43] The story emphasized Chambers "calm demeanor" and did not mention his lies until the fifth paragraph. The Times' treatment paralleled that of the conservative newspapers: Chicago Tribune and Los Angeles Times headlines, respectively, were "Chambers Says Wadleigh Was 2d Spy Source" and "Ex-Red Names Second U.S. Aide as Spy

Helper."[44]

One week later the testimony of Whittaker Chambers' wife Esther became crucial to Chambers' contention, denied by Hiss, that Chambers and Hiss had been close friends during the 1930s. The Los Angeles Times, under a headline "Wife Gives Ringing Chambers Defense," began its story, "Subjected to a stinging and sarcastic cross-examination at the Alger Hiss perjury trial, Mrs. Whittaker Chambers finally cried out in defense of her husband today as 'a decent citizen and a great man.'"[45] The Chicago Tribune was also pro-Chambers, and even suggested comfortable cruelty among the Hisses: "Hiss, resplendent in a cream colored summer suit, and his wife, in a cotton frock and a pert green hat, beamed as the 49 year old witness grew pale and exhausted, hesitated and faltered...under a merciless, four hour cross-examination."[46]

The Washington Post, however, transformed that one faltering moment -- Esther Chambers could not remember whether she had seen the Hisses twelve years earlier at an anniversary party or a New Year's Eve party -- into a front page headline: "Chambers' Wife Alters Testimony."[47] Would the New York Times do likewise? No: The Times even portrayed Esther Chambers as heroic in a headline, "Chambers' Wife, Defiant, Testifies He Is 'Great Man,'"[48] and a story about how "the 110-pound Maryland housewife pitted her resources against those of the veteran trial lawyer throughout the day."[49]

One final example of differential reporting came on June 16, when newspapers reported the testimony of a State Department

secretary who had worked for Hiss. Part of her testimony was damaging to Hiss' case: She testified that four memoranda in Hiss' handwriting on top secret subjects were not made in the course of regular State Department business. Part could be construed as supportive: She also noted that State Department employees other than Hiss had access to some of the documents Chambers said he had received from Hiss.

The Chicago Tribune's lead was pro-Chambers, describing how the secretary had "stunned the defense at the Alger Hiss perjury trial today with a series of damaging assertions," most notably the one about Hiss' secret memoranda.[50] The Washington Post's story was pro-Hiss, beginning with the headline "State Secrets Open to Many, Hiss Trial Told," and continuing with a direct presentation of the spin put on the story by the Hiss camp: "Trial attorneys for Alger Hiss today emphasized that dozens of other State Department employes had access to documents which Whittaker Chambers said he received from Hiss in 1938."[51] Again, the New York Times headlined the pro-Chambers angle: "Secretary Identifies 4 Papers in Writing of Hiss."[52]

The New York Times, then, moved as the hypothesis suggested it would: It chose not to fight the evidence. The Post, though, seemed to redouble its pro-Hiss efforts as the goal of finding him legally guiltless was receding.

Phase Four: Conservative Coverage Ends With a Whimper

Once the trial ended, the Washington Post published an editorial disdaining the process by which Hiss had been brought to justice: Hiss, said the Post, "had the misfortune of being

tempted to betray his country in an era of widespread illusions about communism."[53] (Only a "misfortune"? Only temptation, or actual betrayal?) The Post commented on "the crime of which he has been convicted."[54] (Not that which he committed.)

The New York Times, though, accepted the verdict, stating in an editorial "that the examination of the charges brought against Mr. Hiss has been full and fair."[55] In its news coverage the Times listed four telling points:

> The fact that the incriminating documents were typed on the Hiss typewriter. The fact that four of the incriminating papers were in Hiss' handwriting. The inability of the Hisses to establish clearly the contention that they were not in communication with the Chamberses at the period when the papers were allegedly passed. The testimony that the Chamberses were extremely familiar with the Hiss household in the critical period.[56]

The surprising development during this phase was the limited reporting within conservative newspapers as Chambers was winning his case. Chambers, throughout the affair, had tried to teach that Communism could not be defeated by American materialism: he argued that it was the near-religious vision of Communism that attracted to its ranks persons like Alger Hiss.[57] Chambers had stated that Americans must have faith in God both for personal salvation and for societal survival in the face of Marxist faith.[58] The conservative newspapers, though, ignored Chambers' message.

Instead, both the Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune kept harping on the political. A Los Angeles Times' editorial, "The Alger Hiss Perjury Trial Verdict," crowed that "the outcome of the trial... should add to the red face of President Truman who, for political purposes, has jeered at Congressional

investigations and revelations of Communistic infiltration into government office as 'red herring.'"[59] The Tribune again attacked the New Deal, "which sponsored and protected this monstrous conspiracy against America."[60]

Overall, the turn taken by the Post during phase three and the limited coverage of the conservative newspapers during page four raises some interesting questions: Why did the Post redouble its support of Hiss even as the New York Times was backing away? Why did the conservative newspapers, as victory became apparent, ignore Chambers' voyage into the deeper implications of the affair?

Speculations: Liberal Boosterism?

One theory to explain the Post's strange behavior in the face of the evidence is ideological: the Post was black and white and red all over. At the time, one conservative magazine editor, Isaac Don Levine, called the Post "a Trojan Horse for totalitarianism."[61] Michigan Congressman George A. Dondero termed it "the Washington edition of the Daily Worker."[62]

An examination of other stories prominent in the Post during the Chambers-Hiss affair does not bear out such a conclusion. The Post was as consistent as many other papers of the era in its news and editorial denunciation of Communist efforts in Berlin, China, and other world hot spots.[63] As the Chambers-Hiss controversy was beginning, the Post, like other newspapers of the period, was bannering on page one a dramatic escape in New York: "Soviet Teacher Leaps From Consulate Window."[64]

A refrain in the stories of both the Chicago Tribune and the

Washington Post provides a clue. The Tribune constantly used the Chambers-Hiss affair as a platform for which to argue for a shrinking of the federal bureaucracy. Washington agencies, according to the Tribune, were "honeycombed" with officials whose loyalties were "pledged to an alien ideology."[65] The most efficient way to deal with the problem, according to the Tribune, was to shrink the bureaucracy, perhaps back to its pre-New Deal size. The Post, for its part, saw the same danger from the other side. It agreed with President Truman's concern that the Chambers-Hiss hearings were "seriously impairing the morale of federal employes, and undermining public confidence in the government."[66]

What split off the Post from the Times? The answer must be speculative -- principal editors did not leave their reminiscences on this question, and all of them are now dead -- but we may have a twist here on the old practice of "boosterism" (newspaper reporting designed to aid community economic interests). The term boosterism, for the most part, has been used in reference to promotion of private sector business, industry and tourism.[67] Boosterism in Washington, D.C., though, would mean support of the federal bureaucracy, Washington's biggest industry -- and in the context of 1948, that meant support for Hiss.[68]

Examination of the Post's history lends credence to such a theory. Publishers Eugene Meyer and Philip Graham defeated two competing newspapers from the New Deal through the New Frontier by making the Post the voice of the rapidly growing executive branch.[69] Again, arguing that the Post was engaged in federal

boosterism is speculative, but it is clearly one reason why Post journalists swung back in phase three to an essentially irrational defense of a bureaucratic symbol under attack.[70] The New York Times, meanwhile, was removed from such direct booster pressures, and was able to read successfully handwriting that by mid-1949 covered Alger Hiss' wall.

The Conservative Side: Theological Distancing?

Why did the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times seem to lose enthusiasm for Chambers even as he was being vindicated? Again, in the absence of editors' accounts answers must be speculative, but one hint may arise out of Chambers' statements that he was a Christian and a "man of the right," not a conservative.[71] By this Chambers meant that he saw American materialism as no answer to Soviet materialism; he saw both sharing the modern "vision of man, once more the central figure of the Creation, not because God made man in His image, but because man's mind makes him the most intelligent of the animals."[72] Chambers raised such theological issues from the start of his public agony: His first statement to the press, shortly before appearing as a Congressional hearing witness, was that he had left the Communist Party because "it was an evil."[73]

Neither the Chicago Tribune nor the Los Angeles Times covered the story as Chambers saw it, with an emphasis on the theological dimensions. Thus, Chambers could receive support for a time, but not understanding: His agenda and the conservative press agendas deviated as he emphasized Christian beliefs and criticized materialism of all stripes. After listening to

Chambers' statements, one observer suggested that the question was "no longer whether Alger Hiss is guilty. The question now is whether God exists."[74] Many conservative journalists, like many of their liberal counterparts, seemed uncomfortable with the debate on those terms.

Conclusions

This explanation of the conservative newspapers' failure to follow through, like that of the Washington Post's separation from the New York Time position, must remain speculative. Overall, though, study of Chambers-Hiss coverage in the four newspapers has led to four clear conclusions. First, the newspapers originally split on ideological grounds. Second, as the evidence accumulated, the New York Times was honest enough to shift. Third, the Washington Post, after wavering in phase two, reassumed its hardline pro-Hiss stance. Fourth, the conservative newspapers were pro-Chambers on their political grounds, not his religious grounds. They did not examine the deeper implications of the views of Chambers and the fall of Hiss.

Notes

1 The two best contemporary accounts of the Chambers-Hiss affair by non-participants are Bert Andrews and Peter Andrews, A Tragedy of History (Washington: Robert B. Luce, 1962), and Alistair Cooke, A Generation on Trial (New York: Knopf, 1950); the Andrews book is pro-Chambers, Cooke's is pro-Hiss. For Chambers' account, see his book Witness (New York: Random House, 1952); for Hiss' account, see his book In the Court of Public Opinion (New York: Knopf, 1957). The best scholarly book by far is Allan Weinstein, Perjury (New York: Knopf, 1978).

A few of the many other books consulted as background reading for this study: Morton and Michael Levitt, A Tissue of Lies: Nixon vs. Hiss (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Athan Theoharis, ed., Beyond the Hiss Case (Philadelphia: Temple U. Press, 1982); John Chabot Smith, Alger Hiss: The True Story (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), p. 293; Allen Jowitt, The Strange Case of Alger Hiss (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953); Meyer Zeligs, Friendship and Fratricide (New York: Viking, 1967); Tony Hiss, Laughing Last (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

2 Whittaker Chambers, a senior editor of Time, testified that he had been a courier during the 1930s between Soviet officials and several Roosevelt Administration officials who had agreed, for ideological reasons, to copy secret documents and have them delivered to the Soviets. One Administration official, Julian Wadleigh, confessed his role. Others had died or, when called to testify, took the Fifth Amendment.

One of the accused, Alger Hiss, denied having been a Communist Party member, initially denied ever knowing Chambers, and later admitted an acquaintance but denied any participation in espionage. Hiss' alleged complicity was front page news because he had been a highly-placed State Department official during the 1930s and most of the 1940s, and had then left the State Department to accept a prestigious position as head of the Carnegie Endowment for World Peace.

Hiss stayed on the front pages for the next year and a half because he continued to deny any involvement with the Soviets, even as Chambers produced copies of secret State Department documents retyped on a typewriter Hiss had at his home, microfilm of secret State Department documents with Hiss' initials on them, and so on. Eventually, a jury found Hiss guilty of perjury. Pro-Hiss observers attacked the verdict for many years, but historian Weinstein's book Perjury, with its careful and comprehensive examination of the testimony and evidence, followed by the conclusion that Hiss was lying, seems definitive.

3 Some observers have given anecdotes concerning press reaction. For instance, Tony Hiss wrote concerning his father, "Al wasn't surprised when one of the reporters covering the case came up to him after the jury had filed out to deliberated and said, `Do you want to know the verdict of the press? Not guilty -- in fifteen minutes.'" Whether or not that was the "verdict of the press," the jury did not agree.

4 All June 3, 1948, p. 1 stories.

5 Ibid. The author, as a check on his conclusions, had students without prior knowledge of the Chambers-Hiss confrontation read the coverage. Each of five students who read the Washington Post's coverage, which the author had found to be generally pro-Hiss, came away with the belief that Hiss was innocent. Each of five students who read the Chicago Tribune's coverage (found to be generally pro-Chambers) came to believe that Hiss was guilty.

6 Washington Post, August 25, 1948, p. 1. See also Post, August 19, 1948, p.2.

7 New York Times, August 29, 1944, Section IV, p. 1.

8 Washington Post, August 6, 1948, p. 20; August 14, p. 4.

9 New York Times, August 15, 1948, Sec. IV, p. 7. The Post's editorial page boasted a drawing of a large tiger labeled "smear statements" ready to pounce on a man labeled "Innocent Victims."

10 According to the Tribune, "New Dealers employed ridicule, smears, executive powers, the courts, political pressure, and the army in the attempt to hide any disclosure of the operations of Communists and fellow travelers within the government." (Aug 9, 1948, p. 1)

11 Chicago Tribune, August 4, 1948, p. 1.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 22.

14 Ibid.

15 Los Angeles Times, August 4, 1948, p. 1.

16 Ibid., August 11, Section II, p. 4.

17 Hiss' repeated denials continued to receive front page billing, but when reporters were given copies of microfilmed documents, a front page story in the December 12 Post acknowledged that "State Department files actually were

being rifled for the benefit of a foreign power."

18 Washington Post, December 5, 1948, p. 1.

19 Ibid., December 8, p. 14.

20 Ibid., December 10, p. 21.

21 Ibid., December 17, p. 22.

22 New York Times, December 8, 1948, p. 1; see also December 7, p. 1.

23 Ibid., December 9, p. 32.

24 Chicago Tribune, December 3, 1948, p. 1.

25 Ibid., December 4, 1948, p. 1.

26 Ibid, December 6, p. 1.

27 Ibid., p. 12.

28 Los Angeles Times, December 8, 1948, Section II, p. 4.

29 Ibid., p. 4.

30 Washington Post, June 2, 1949, p. 1.

31 Ibid., June 24, p. 1.

32 Ibid., June 25, p. 1.

33 Ibid., June 28, p. 1.

34 Ibid., June 4, p. 1; July 7, p. 1; November 24, 1949, p. 6.

35 Ibid., July 7, pp. 1, 11.

36 Ibid., November 24, 1949, p. 6.

37 Ibid., July 10, 1949, p. 4B.

38 In doing so, the New York Times clearly was following the agenda of prosecutor Thomas Murphy. Murphy kept pointing to the microfilm and the papers typed on Hiss' typewriter. "Always come back to the documents in applying reason to this case," he told jurors, and then asked, "If you caught a child in the kitchen with jam on his face and you asked him if he was in the kitchen and he said no -- what does your normal, everyday intelligence tell you?" (Times, July 8, 1949, p. 8.)

39 Washington Post, June 3, 1949, pp. 1, 4.

40 New York Times, June 3, p. 1.

41 Ibid.

42 Washington Post, June 7, 1949, p. 1.

43 New York Times, June 7, p. 1.

44 Chicago Tribune, June 7, p. 2; Los Angeles Times, June 7, p. 13.

45 Los Angeles Times, June 14, 1949, p. 6.

46 Chicago Tribune, June 14, p. 1.

47 Washington Post, June 14, p. 1.

48 New York Times, June 14, p. 1.

49 Ibid.

50 Chicago Tribune, June 16, 1949, p. 3.

51 Washington Post, June 16, p. 1.

52 New York Times, June 16, p. 1.

53 Washington Post, January 23, 1950, p. 20.

54 Ibid.

55 New York Times, January 22, Section IV, p. 12.

56 Ibid., Section I, p. 1.

57 Chambers consistently stressed presuppositions; for instance, concerning communism, he said: "It is not new. It is, in fact, man's second oldest faith. Its promise was whispered in the first days of the Creation under the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: 'Ye shall be as gods.' It is the great alternative faith of mankind....The Communist vision is the vision of Man without God. It is the vision of man's mind displacing God as the creative intelligence of the world. (Chambers, Witness, p. 9)

58 Chambers was depressed at reporters' lack of interest. He wrote that "questioning seldom got beyond the current news." (Witness, p. 714)

59 Los Angeles Times, January 22, 1950, Section II, p. 4.

60 Chicago Tribune, January 22, p.

61 Quoted in Tom Kelly, The Imperial Post (New York: William Morrow, 1983), p. 110.

62 Quoted in Chalmers Roberts, The Washington Post: The First 100 Years (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 276. Another possible explanation of Post bias was the power of personal connections. Post publisher Philip Graham and Hiss knew each other and shared friends. Both had gone to Harvard Law School and clerked for Supreme Court justices; Graham had clerked from 1939 through 1941 for Stanley Reed and Felix Frankfurter, the same two Supreme Court Justices who testified for Alger Hiss in 1948. But Graham was not personally close to Hiss, and no evidence of his involvement in the case or its coverage has been found.

63 During the 1930s Phil Graham, according to his close friend Ed Prichard, had been a "half-assed apologist" for the Soviet Union. A decade of political and personal changes had gone by, though, and the Soviet Union was not treated kindly in the Post during the late 1940s.

64 Washington Post, August 13, 1948, p. 1. Mrs. Oskana Kosenkina had attempted to defect, had been seized by Soviet officials and brought back to the consulate in New York, and had jumped from a third floor window to gain freedom. The Post noted, "Mrs. Kosenkina's dramatic leap climaxed five days of mounting tension around her. In the background have been the sensational charges of spying on behalf of Russia aired before congressional committees in Washington."

65 Chicago Tribune, January 22, 1950, Section I, p. 18.

66 Washington Post, August 6, 1948, p. 1. It is important to recall that in 1947 and 1948 Republicans had a majority of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1930 (and the last time, up to the present). President Harry Truman, who was committed to the maintenance of substantial federal power (and the consequent preservation or expansion of executive branch job opportunities and salaries), seemed to be in political trouble. At this critical juncture a major story affecting the future of the bureaucracy developed.

67 The Times Mirror Co.'s 1984 annual report summarized the first century of its Los Angeles Times by praising the newspaper's "relentless boosterism" that "undoubtedly lured multitudes of Easterners and Westerners to the City of Angels" (and also produced readers for what became a mass circulation newspaper).

68 Hiss, following Chambers' accusations, received support from President Truman and many high executive branch officials. If the judgment of these leaders was seen to be so poor, and if other executive branch officials were not to be trusted, the future of governmental centralization (and Post circulation) would not be bright.

69 Roberts, Kelly and David Halberstam (The Powers That Be

(New York: Knopf, 1979), all discuss the growth of the Post. None is a historian, but their accounts of the Post publishers' goals are all similar.

70 Just as James Buchanan and other developers of "public choice" economic theory have applied business analysis to government policy-making, so the concept of boosterism might be useful to explain positions of liberal newspapers as well as conservative ones. Certainly, the stakes of the Hiss affairs were widely understood at the time. As Chambers put it, Hiss' "roots could not be disturbed without disturbing all the roots on all sides of him." (Witness, p. 550.)

71 For further discussion of the distinction, see Chambers, Cold Friday (New York: Random House, 1964).

72 Chambers, Witness, p. 9

73 Ibid.

74 Saturday Evening Post, November 15, 1952, p. 121.